

Soldiers among 53 on trial in Cairo court

CAIRO (R) — A military court has charged 53 militants, including three from the army, with plotting to overthrow the government in the first such case against army personnel since the murder of President Anwar Sadat.

The militants also included members of the professional elite — engineers, doctors, lawyers and university students.

Waving the Koran from behind an iron cage in the court, the defendants, wearing beards and the white robes of dedicated Muslims, urged the armed forces to rise up and defend Islam.

"The armed forces is the driving force which will liberate the Muslims. You, the army of Egypt, rise up and clear the shame from Muslims," shouted a suspect.

"You, the army of Muslims, are our only hope," he added.

Magdi Salem, another defendant, said: "The army of Egypt should not be dragged into side battles. The army should not be the army of a leader. It must not stay like that. The army of Egypt should rise up to defend the Muslims."

Military prosecutor Brigadier-General Wagdi Al Saifi accused the militants, seven of whom are at large, of forming an illegal group and plotting to overthrow the government, assassinate public figures and possessing arms and leaflets inciting hatred against the government.

The 53 include two military cadets and an officer in a reserve unit. If convicted they could all face the death penalty.

A cadet identified as Sameeh, 18, said he was arrested at the military academy because he advocated a purist Islamic state.

"I do not belong to any group or party. I was spreading Al Dawa'a (Islamic call) among young men in the academy," he said.

The controversial military courts, set up by President Hosni Mubarak to bypass normal judicial practice and ensure harsh

punishment for militants, have sent 15 men to the gallows in the last six months.

Military lawyers said a civilian court verdict acquitting 24 militants on Saturday of the 1990 murder of Parliament Speaker Rifaa Al Mahjoub was a blow to the government.

The civil judge accused security forces of resorting to torture to extract confessions to justify their incompetence and impotence in catching the real culprits.

The 53 were among 248 accused to belonging to a previously unknown group. The Vanguard of the New Holy Struggle, whose leader, Ayman Zawahri, lives in Afghanistan and Iran.

Military lawyers said five other army officers were among the others to be tried soon. It was the first time military personnel have been implicated in militant violence in Egypt, which closely vets its police and armed forces for traces of sympathy with Muslim militants.

Khaled Ismaili, a junior army officer, led militants from an organisation called Jihad which assassinated Mr. Sadat at a military parade in 1981.

Security sources said Mr. Zawahri, a medical doctor jailed for three years in Mr. Sadat's killing, was trying to reorganise Jihad when his group was caught.

Jihad, which advocates holy war as the only means to topple the Egyptian government and apply Islamic Sharia law, focuses on recruiting Islamists in the army on the grounds that it is the only force capable of toppling the government.

Defendants showed journalists scars on their legs and necks which they said were from torture by electric shocks, boiling water, beatings and whipping by police to extract confessions.

"We just want to be treated as animals. The treatment we are receiving is far below animals," said Nizar Ghourab, one of the suspects, who is a lawyer. He said he would wish death rather than the

long torture sessions and interrogations by police.

The London-based Islamic Council called Mooday for Egypt to release all political prisoners following the acquittal of the 27 charged in connection with the Mahjoub's assassination.

The council described the verdict as a slap in the face of the country's President Hosni Mubarak, and is a statement called for "the strongest pressure to be put on Mubarak and his regime to cease their practice of torture and release all political prisoners."

The council was set up in London in 1973, and has representatives in most European countries. It claims to be independent, and says it maintains strong links with many governments in Muslim countries.

An official Egyptian daily Monday slammed the court for acquitting the 27.

The editor-in-chief of Al Gurniyya, Mahfuz Al Ansari, wrote that the court's presiding judge had acquitted the defendants despite "a wealth of evidence" to convict them.

The verdict was based on the fact that security services "resorted to illegal means, including torture, to obtain evidence," which may constitute "a (separate) crime which must out erase another committed in broad daylight," he argued.

Addressing himself to the judge, Mr. Ansari wrote: "Extorting confessions through torture is illegal, but what do you say of premeditated murder?"

The court verdict still needs to be ratified by President Muharik, lawyers said.

But militant sources feared that Mr. Muharik, acting under an emergency anti-terrorism law, would cancel the sentences and order a re-trial of the 24 as he did with preacher Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman.

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MAJLIS DEBATE: Iranian President Akbar Hamedani addresses the Majlis, the new cabinet ministers (see page 10). At right is Iranian Parliament, prior to deliberations on the Natoq Nouri (AFP photo)

Nearly 300 killed in clashes between Turkish forces, rebels

ANKARA (AFP) — Some 295 people, including 275 Kurdish rebels, died in weekend clashes between Kurdish separatists and government troops in southeastern Turkey, where demonstrations were held marking the 10th anniversary of the armed Kurdish rebellion.

At least 250 members of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), were killed during widespread government sweeps against a group of up to 400 rebels on Mount Buzul, located in the southeastern triangle of Cukurca, Hakkari and Yuksekova. Turkish authorities said 2,000 villagers from the area, according to a communiqué from local authorities.

Some 142 people, including five PKK members, were arrested and weapons were seized, authorities said.

Six rebels, including a woman, were killed Sunday in Diyarbakir, in the eastern region of Agri, when government troops attempted to stop a convoy of trucks at a checkpoint. One Turkish soldier was killed and another injured during an exchange of gunfire.

The death toll in Diyarbakir brings to 20 the number of people killed since Saturday when 10 Kurdish demonstrators died in Diger, in the eastern province of Kars.

Unal Erkan, the head of the Diyarbakir region which is under a state of emergency, said an official declaration would be made as soon as the final death toll is available.

Meanwhile, at least 20 people died in weekend clashes between Kurdish separatists and government troops in eastern Anatolia.

Three people, including one PKK member, were killed Sunday near Malazgirt, in the eastern province of Mus, who government troops tried to stop a PKK demonstration that included 2,000 villagers from the area, according to a communiqué from local authorities.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Sudan coup plot trial to begin shortly

KHARTOUM (R) — The trial of 90 people, including a former army chief and a former security chief, on charges of plotting to overthrow Sudan's Islamic government will begin shortly, the head of the investigating committee said. Abdul Rahman Ibrahim, quoted by the official Sudan News Agency (SUNA) on Sunday, said the investigation was almost complete and those defendants who had not fled the country were about to be tried in open court. Mr. Ibrahim said 14 of the accused were in the country and had been given the right to meet their relatives and hire lawyers to defend them. The state would provide lawyers for those unable to afford the cost of a lawyer, he said. He gave no precise date for the start of the trial and no details of the charges but the accused face life imprisonment or death if found guilty.

League envoy begins Gulf tour

CAIRO (R) — An Arab League envoy left for Saudi Arabia Monday on the start of a Gulf tour to follow up Arab promises of \$500 million to aid southern Lebanon, badly damaged in Israeli bombardment last month. Ambassador Mayhoub Al Mayhoub, told reporters the aim of his mission to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates was to implement the resolutions of a league meeting in Damascus that pledged the aid. The ambassador said he would deliver messages to Gulf leaders from league Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid, who is due to start a Gulf tour of his own next week. Dr. Abdul Meguid visited Beirut on Saturday seeking to ensure that Arab aid would be efficiently channelled to South Lebanon.

Chadian foes in peace pact — Libyan agency

TRIPOLI (AFP) — The Chadian government and rebels have signed a peace accord, mediated by Libya and Sudan, Libya's official JANA news agency reported Monday. The deal was signed Sunday after talks between Mohammad Ali Abdulla, military advisor to Chadian President Idriss Deby, and Abbas Koty, the head of a rebel movement active in the east, JANA said. The two men had held several meetings since Wednesday, the agency said. Mr. Koty's supporters have been held responsible by the authorities in Ndjamena for a massacre of 82 people at Chokoyam in the eastern Chad region bordering on Sudan on Aug. 4. Mr. Koty, Mr. Deby's former defence minister, fled Ndjamena in June 1992 after he was accused of involvement in a foiled coup plot against the Chadian military强人. Government radio in Chad later announced that Mr. Koty was expected in the capital following signature of the peace pact.

Seven convicted criminals hanged in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Seven convicted murderers were hanged Monday in Egypt's biggest mass hanging of common criminals, the official Middle East News Agency (MENA) reported. The seven were convicted of premeditated murder in various Egyptian provinces and were executed at the Tanta prison in the Nile Delta, 80 kilometres north of Cairo. Four other convicted murderers have been hanged in recent days, the news agency added. Egyptian authorities have also executed 15 Islamic militants since June for politically-motivated attacks.

Israeli court rejects Manning appeal

TEL AVIV (AP) — The supreme court ruled Monday that Israel should extradite an American woman wanted in connection with a California murder, although she had already stood trial in the case. Rochelle Manning, 43, and her husband, Robert, are suspected of involvement in sending a booby-trapped appliance to a computer firm in Manhattan Beach in 1980. It killed a secretary, Patricia Wilkerson. All that remained now was for Justice Minister David Levy to sign Mrs. Manning's extradition order within 60 days, said justice ministry spokeswoman Etty Shoshana. Robert Manning, 41, was extradited last month after the supreme court rejected the couple's appeal that their religious Jewish needs would not be met in American prisons. Mrs. Manning launched an additional appeal based on double jeopardy. Unlike Robert, she had been tried for the murder in the U.S., but the jury was unable to deliver a verdict and a mistrial was declared.

2 Pakistanis killed in Kuwait blast

KUWAIT (R) — Two Pakistani soldiers have been killed in Kuwait by an explosion while trying to clear explosives left over from the 1991 Gulf war, a Pakistani diplomat said Monday. "It was a very unfortunate accident... one of them died instantly and the other expired later in hospital." Pakistan's Ambassador Karimullah Khan Ghori told Reuters. The bodies of the two soldiers, Nazir Ahmad, 30, and Mohammad Sadiq, 38, were flown to Pakistan after Wednesday's explosion. Three other Pakistanis were hurt in the blast, one seriously.

U.S. lawmaker plans Demjanjuk's return

TEL AVIV — A U.S. congressman said Monday he planned to escort John Demjanjuk home from Israel this week after the former American autoworker's acquittal as a Nazi guard. James Traficant, a Democrat from Mr. Demjanjuk's home state of Ohio, said he expected Israel's supreme court to reject demands by holocaust survivors, Nazi hunters and others that Mr. Demjanjuk stand trial for other alleged war crimes. The court will rule Wednesday. "I am convinced that he will be released. He was extradited here as 'Ivan.' It's evident he is not 'Ivan,'" Mr. Traficant told Reuters.

Iranian prosecutor commits suicide

TEHRAN (R) — An Iranian provincial prosecutor has killed himself, leaving behind a letter saying he had got into trouble for reporting official wrongdoings. Salam newspaper said on Monday Mohsen Khodaverdi, who had served for more than 10 years as prosecutor in Rasht, a provincial capital near the Caspian coast, shot himself with a pistol, it said. "It has been learned that Mr. Khodaverdi has left behind a detailed letter in which he pointed to reports he had made about wrongdoings attributed to judicial and other officials and said those reports caused some problems for him," Salam said. The paper urged judicial authorities to make the letter public.

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Home News



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali Monday meets with renowned Egyptian writer and journalist Mohammad Heikal (Petra photo)

Heikal says Arabs should close ranks

AMMAN (Petra) — Egyptian writer and journalist Mohammad Hasanien Heikal Monday voiced his appreciation of His Majesty King Hussein's efforts to bring about solidarity among Arab countries and close Arab ranks.

In an interview with the Jordan News Agency, Petra, following a meeting with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali, Mr. Heikal said all Arab countries ought to support Jordan in its quest to reestablish Arab solidarity and enhance the march of

democracy.

"There is urgent need for the Arab states to close their ranks and rise above their petty differences and transcend the present difficulties," said Mr. Heikal in his statement.

Unless they accomplish this and play an active role in the shaping of the modern world, they will find themselves manipulated by other nations, warned Mr. Heikal.

Expressing support for Jordan's democratic process, Mr.

Heikal said Jordan will play a leading role in the region and therefore it ought to be helped and supported in its endeavours by other Arab countries.

The Foreign Ministry is the sole government department authorised to address the Arab League and all other Arab and foreign organisations and governments, it noted.

Dr. Majali said different government departments can channel all their correspondence with the Arab League through the Foreign Ministry.

Majali orders contact with Arab League through proper channel

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali Monday issued a circular to government departments instructing them to refrain from making contacts with the Arab League General Secretariat or other Arab League agencies directly.

All contacts and correspondence with the league, said the circular, should be conducted through the Foreign Ministry in Amman.

In the circular, the prime minister said that it was noticed that several ministries and other official government departments have been making direct contact with the Arab League in Cairo without notifying the Foreign Ministry. Such practice could complicate matters for the government and embarrass the Foreign Ministry, said the circular.

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JPA was not consulted on code of honour — statement

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Press Association (JPA) Monday issued a statement declaring that the JPA was not a party to or even consulted on the proposed press code of honour, as outlined last Friday by Information Minister Ma'an Abu Nowar.

According to the statement, the JPA reaffirms its commitment to the JPA Law which it said grants it independence and freedom to organise matters related to the journalism profession and journalists' affairs.

The JPA Council reaffirms its total commitment to the JPA Law and does not accept tutelage or interference in its affairs by any party — official or otherwise, said the statement issued following a regular session of the JPA Council chaired by its president, Suleiman Al Qudah.

The JPA Council learned of the contents of this proposed code from the local press, added the statement.

JORDAN TIMES, TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 1993 3



Ma'an Abu Nowar



Suleiman Al Qudah

JPA members are totally committed to the oath they took when they were sworn in, vowing to remain faithful to the homeland and the King, carry out their duties and practice journalism with loyalty, safeguard the profession and respect laws related to it, added the statement.

The minister of information had said that he presented the proposal of enacting a press code of honour to the JPA president, adding that such a charter would be endorsed only after consultations with the journalists, writers and intellectuals.

The JPA statement stressed the association's commitment to the Arab Press Charter of 1972, endorsed by the Third Conference of the Arab Journalists Union.

It said the conference had reaffirmed two important points: freedom and responsibility in the journalists' work.

Situation deteriorates in occupied territories — report

AMMAN (Petra) — The general situation in the Israeli-occupied Arab lands has deteriorated to a serious level over the past months mainly because of Israel's imposition of a siege on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to a report released Monday by the Foreign Ministry's Occupied Territories Affairs Department.

The report quoted figures given by Betselem, an Israeli court rejects human rights group, which noted that the Israeli forces were now killing more young Palestinian boys than they had over the past 25 years of occupation.

The group recorded 187 Palestinian children killed by Israeli forces since the start of the intifada in 1987, including 38 in the first six months of 1993, the report added.

It quoted secret documents whose contents were allegedly leaked to foreign circles and were said to reveal the presence of a plan by the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem to completely obliterate the Arab religious and cul-

tural characters of the holy city to facilitate its Judaisation process.

Haaretz, an Israeli daily said several existing Arab and Islamic sites would be removed including ancient walls and sites adjacent to the Al Haram Al Sharif, the Dome of the Rock, the report noted.

In the past month, the foreign ministry report said, Israeli authorities continued their cam-

paigns against Christian and Islamic holy places, desecrating holy sites and closing several mosques in Jerusalem, Nablus, Ramallah and Al Bireh.

Israel continued the confiscation of Arab-owned lands and so far has seized 3,080,725 dunums of land in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip the report pointed out.

It said the lands are being seized for the construction of more Jewish settlements, adding that to date, 186 settlements have been erected on the West Bank and 20 in the Gaza Strip.

Furthermore, the Israeli courts last month passed verdicts on 145 Palestinian citizens who are imprisoned for periods ranging from several months to several years, the report said.

A Palestinian boy is evacuated last April, seconds after being shot in the leg by an Israeli soldier who within half an hour wounded five

boys with his sniper fire in the Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood of Gaza City (AFP photo)

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Opinion & Analysis

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Justice and the right to know

IN 1945, Kent Cooper coined an expression that later became the subject of heated debate in the U.S.: "The public has the right to know."

This article of faith in the free flow of information is no longer a subject of controversy, especially after it became codified in international human rights conventions such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Yet this right to know remains a controversy in this part of the world in spite of the fact Jordan and other Middle Eastern states have all ratified the ICCPR.

Take for example, 'the news about' the reported plot to assassinate His Majesty the King. Many Jordanians had first heard it through no other than Israeli radio and television and some foreign newscasts. Would it not have been infinitely more useful and right if they heard the news about the plot directly from Jordanian sources?

True, there may have been a legal impediment to releasing the news while an investigation was being conducted, especially if any revelations were going to hinder the course of justice or interfere with it. But such constraint cannot possibly explain the lid of secrecy that has been imposed so far on the arrest of 30 Jordanians as far back as April and May as conspirators in the alleged plot.

Leaving the news to be revealed by international news agencies, only to be used as grist for the rumour mills, serves no interest except to put Jordan and Jordanians in a difficult position.

All countries have various degrees of state security problems and Jordan is no exception. This is not to diminish the seriousness of the charges levelled against the 10 Jordanians who will stand trial later on this month, two of them in absentia. On the contrary, all plotters against the sovereign deserve the stiffer punishment. Yet even though the case against the accused is shocking to all of us who believed that with the introduction of democracy domestic peace is nearly secured, we must at all times be prepared to handle such situations, calmly and collectively.

The love, respect and loyalty that His Majesty commands among his people are too firm, too strong to be shaken by any person, or group of people. Plots against him and the state can therefore only strengthen this people's resolve to back their leader and fight for the ideals and achievements adopted and made under his leadership.

But as the era of martial law is over and the Kingdom is in the midst of a democratisation process unprecedented in the Arab World, there is cause to believe that due process of the law will be observed during the investigation of the case against the alleged plotters as well as during their trial. Democracy may not have been served well by concealing news about the early arrests of the suspected individuals and keeping many of them incommunicado without the benefit of early legal counsel or visitation from their families. It is not too late, however, to prove that the rule of law is the solid basis of our democracy. In fact, this is the right time to both do justice and protect our democratic march in one go.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE FIRST stage of constitutional preparations for holding the coming parliamentary elections has now ended, and steps are taken towards ending the second and third stages, culminating with the election, said Al Dustour daily Monday. Updating the voter lists and announcing the candidates, to be followed by the election campaigns, are the next stages in the process preceding the Nov. 8 elections, said the daily. The paper expressed satisfaction that nearly 1.5 million people have now registered to vote, something, the paper said, that reflects the Jordanian people's realisation of importance of these elections as part of the ongoing democratisation process in the Kingdom. The registration of the great number of people to vote also reflects the Jordanian people's confidence in the election system being fair and free and allowing them to put the right persons in Parliament, continued the daily. Keenness on the part of the electorate to register and the participate in the elections is by itself a clear manifestation of the people's determination to pursue all efforts to enhance democracy in Jordan, it added. The paper expressed hope that the coming elections will witness a great turnout of voters not only exercising their right of choosing their representatives for the coming four years but also keen on ensuring a fair and free voting system for the years to come.

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i Arabic daily lauded the efforts of the Ministry of Education for directing young people's attention towards vocational training which can ensure for them a decent living. Tareq Maserweh said that while these efforts are appreciated, it is incumbent upon the Labour Ministry to pave the ground for the trained men and women to earn a decent living by controlling the trades and workshops around the country through issuing licences only to those actually trained to operate as mechanics, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, etc. He said that the country abounds with many unskilled tradesmen who have obtained licences to open workshops and garages, but offer very bad service to the public since they have missed proper vocational training. The writer suggested that the government lease plots of land to the college graduates, giving them loans to enable them to grow crops and green the country. The writer said that the Jordanian workforce should not only be directed towards trades, but the government should also help the youth earn their living by opening the door and providing the facilities to ensure the realisation of an objective.

The View from Fourth Circle

Signs of hope amidst the humiliation and the scepticism

THE flurry of developments in Arab-Israeli relations in the last month may be seen in the future as an important psychological milestone on the path to a negotiated peace settlement, even though current popular perception may see things in a more pessimistic light. Four particular events lead me to this conclusion: the recent Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the formation of a PLO-mandated coordinating committee to guide the Palestinian negotiators, the American government's apparent frustration with the slow pace of the peace talks and the acceptance by the 400-plus Palestinian expellees in South Lebanon to return home in stages. All four factors are signs of past ways fading away, and of new dynamics that will define the path of Arab-Israeli relations in the future.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon, like all previous Israeli military actions in Lebanon, is already being seen as a failure, in that it cannot generate peace along the Israeli-Lebanese border. The Israelis have repeatedly invaded and occupied southern Lebanon with the declared aim of stopping guerrilla raids and rocket attacks, but the raids and the attacks have never stopped. The only thing that Israel has achieved with its non-stop militarism is to give rise to a new foe in Lebanon in the form of the Islamist Hezbollah group, which now joins the Palestinians and the leftist Lebanese nationalists in struggling for Arab rights in that area. Intelligent Israelis remember that the aim of the Peace in Galilee Operation in 1982 was to pacify the Lebanese-Israeli frontier and they must be questioning themselves as to why — more than a decade later — they have to repeat the same tactics, but this time against new Arab foes.

It is clear that militarism by Arabs or Israelis — however furious, passionate, destructive or repetitive it may be — is not going to resolve the essential political problem between Arabs and Israelis. This will require a political negotiation and the ongoing peace talks will now be strengthened by the formation of the PLO-mandated Palestinian coordinating committee that includes Tunis-based PLO officials and Palestinians from the occupied territories.

The most important historical development here is the ease with which Israel has accommodated itself to negotiating with what is clearly a PLO team — despite Israel's repeated assertions that it would never negotiate with the PLO. Israeli officials rationalise this important change in many different ways and it is their right to engage in the politics of make-believe and mythology. The important substantive point is that the Israeli government and the PLO are now effectively negotiating a peace agreement and this should be welcomed by all.

We on the Arab side are doing things today that we always said we

would never do, such as working out transitional self-governing (autonomy) arrangements and pondering jurisdictional configurations for Jerusalem that satisfy Arab and Israeli demands. The fact that Arabs and Israelis alike are accepting compromise deals is a positive development, rather than a sign of weakness.

An important aspect of the new Palestinian committee is the symbolic of how Palestinians are slowly coming to terms with the hard choices that must be made if the peace talks are to succeed. It is more and more clear that the Palestinians and the other Arab parties will not get everything they demand in one stroke of the peace pen. The negotiating process will take a long time and gains will be made in small, incremental steps, with each step requiring a compromise on absolutely positions.

Fact is that, both Israelis and Palestinians will have to make substantial compromise for peace and stability, but for the moment the pressure is almost totally on the Palestinians. This is why there is so much scepticism in the Arab camp. It is natural to witness the sorts of stresses and tensions within the Palestinian negotiating team that we are now witnessing. It is also a sign of great maturity that these stresses are being resolved through dialogue and internal compromise.

The Israelis will soon have to go through the same process, and it is obvious to most Israeli political figures that they run the risk of severe strains within the Israeli society when they have to make the tough choices that are ahead. The most feared internal Israeli development is the advent of domestic violence by rightwing groups, especially those whose political ideology is closely tied to the continuation of Jewish settlements and Zionism's colonialisation in Palestine. The Israelis will probably have to go through a period of internal violence similar to the one the Palestinians experienced in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when anti-compromise Palestinians and their Arab backers waged a campaign of violence against the Arafat and Fatah-led forces that chose the path of compromise and negotiations.

The eltdown by the 400 Palestinian expellees in southern Lebanon is also an important political signal, even though it is personally humiliating to them and their supporters in Hamas and other Arab circles. The agreement to return home in stages (which they rejected months ago) is a sign that rigid, absolutist negotiating positions usually do not pay off. The lessons learned on the slopes of southern Lebanon should have a positive impact on the negotiations in the future, by prompting both sides to be more realistic, patient and conciliatory. Israel should recognise that its militarism will not

bring it the goals it desires and the Palestinians should learn that rejectionism will not pave the way for achieving Palestinian national objectives and rights.

The American posture is also interesting in view of the above developments. The United States government has signaled its impatience with the peace talks, saying that progress must be made this year or it will leave the Arabs and the Israelis to work things out for themselves. This is offered as something of a threat by Washington, but from our perspective perhaps we should see it as a sign of hope because, in the end, peace and stability will have to be worked out directly by the Arabs and the Israelis.

The intervention of the United States in the Arab-Israeli conflict has been a disaster for the Arabs, given Israel's heavy reliance on American political and military support to maintain the unjust status quo. A reduced American role in the area and more pressure on the Arabs and Israelis to work things out on their own are probably desirable, in view of Washington's recent pro-Israeli posture in the region. The advent of direct PLO-Israeli talks suggests that the traditional stumbling block to peace is slowly being eroded, while the increasingly obvious futility of militarism and rejectionism by both sides are good signs of hope for progress in the peace talks.

Critical in this vision of the future is the element of time; for breakthroughs in the negotiations will not happen suddenly. The original timeframe at the Madrid peace conference envisaged an agreement on an interim self-governing Palestinian authority within about a year, and this is still a long way off. We would be doing well if we agreed on this first transitional stage by the end of 1994, entered into serious talks for the final status peace arrangements in 1996-1997 and started to implement the final status accords by the end of this decade.

The psychological baggage that burdens both sides in the peace talks is heavy and substantial. It cannot be shed in a matter of months. The accumulated fears, anger and mistrust that have been generated by nearly a century of Arab-Zionist warfare in Palestine will need many years to be overcome, and the failed old ways of hardline military and political action by both sides can only be discarded through a slow, persistent process of psychological detente leading to national coexistence and reconciliation. The important signs we have witnessed in the last month suggest that this process is well underway. Its historic importance should not be overlooked.

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Rabin's quiet concessions anger Israeli right

By Jack Redden
Reuter

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is fueling the worst fears of right-wing Israelis who always suspected Middle East peace talks would lead to a slippery slope of concessions.

The naming of Palestinian negotiators to offices in the Palestine Liberation Organisation last week — dismissed by the government as unimportant — was the latest step in a steady erosion of once sacrosanct Israeli positions.

The moves towards direct talks with the PLO have been paralleled by comments alerting Israelis to expect a major, or even complete, withdrawal from the Golan Heights to secure peace with Syria.

Whether he has a long-held plan or a piecemeal, pragmatic realisation of what is necessary to reach Middle East peace, Mr. Rabin has been shifting positions ever since taking office more than a year ago.

"There was a wall," former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir complained after Mr. Rabin allowed the breaching of the barrier erected to prevent direct talks with the "murderous" PLO.

"The Rabin government has done everything to demolish that wall," said Mr. Shamir, whose rightwing Likud Party was ousted by Mr. Rabin's Labour Party in June 1992.

But Mr. Shamir, who entered peace talks in October 1991 under U.S. pressure, said concessions on the PLO were "dwarfed" by those on the Golan Heights, captured in 1967 and all but formally annexed by an earlier Likud government in 1981.

Mr. Shamir, who vowed never to trade one inch of land for peace with Arabs, said Mr. Rabin was planning a total withdrawal from the Golan in return for full normalisation of relations with Syria.

The Rabin government plays down talk of compromise. But an aide to Mr. Rabin said when he took office that a key task was to shift public opinion from the old positions.

Under Mr. Shamir, any contact by an Israeli with the PLO was illegal: A peace campaigner went to prison for carrying his appeal to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. Mr. Shamir began peace talks only after demanding Palestinian negotiators come from the occupied West Bank or Gaza Strip and not show links to the PLO.

That stand was methodically eroded under Mr. Rabin. The ban on private contacts with the PLO was abolished in January and 10 days later a member of parliament from Mr. Rabin's party visited Mr. Arafat at his Tunis headquarters.

Last month Environment Minister Yossi Sarid met a PLO official in Cairo. The story was leaked and Mr. Rabin acknowledged he knew about the "unofficial" meeting in advance.

On Friday, Culture Minister Shulamit Aloni confirmed to Reuters she also had met a PLO official.

Now, at the session of peace talks convening in Washington on August 30, Israeli negotiators will be facing members of a PLO committee, something unthinkable in the decades since the organisation was formed to fight Israel in 1948.

About the only remaining taboo is negotiating with a PLO member from outside the occupied territories, which would raise the question of the millions of Palestinians who still seek the right to return to some part of the original Palestine.

The moves towards direct talks with the PLO have been paralleled by comments alerting Israelis to expect a major, or even complete, withdrawal from the Golan Heights to secure peace with Syria.

"Mr. Rabin has preserved the image that won him election, offsetting any public concern over compromises with an iron-fisted approach to security. His popularity is high following Israel's fierce bombardment of Lebanon last month. If he can make Israelis feel safe while ending 45 years of war through compromise, he knows his position will be secure."

Yossi Ben-Aharon, Mr. Shamir's uncompromising negotiator with Syria, would not contemplate any withdrawal from the plateau that dominates adjoining Syrian and Israeli land.

Mr. Rabin, when seeking election, proposed minor border changes to secure peace. Since then the area has grown continually, to the point where Police Minister Moshe Shahal said last week Israelis were ready to retake all the land.

That spurs fears of right-wing Israelis that peace talks will end in the return of most land captured in the 1967 Middle East war, land they want for both ideological and strategic reasons.

But so far they have failed to ignite popular alarm. Opposition is concentrated in the Jewish settlers of the occupied territories.

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Swiss Bosnian refugees help prepare war crimes trial

By Mitya New
Reuter

BERNE — Bosnian Muslims are giving Swiss authorities chilling accounts of atrocities in their home country, hoping they will help bring the guilty before an international war crimes tribunal.

Switzerland, together with other countries to have accepted refugees from war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina, has responded to a United Nations request to gather information from refugees for use in a planned trial of war criminals in the corridor.

He would not say where the atrocities took place, nor reveal any information about the Bosnian who detailed them, saying only that the account had been independently corroborated by other refugees he and other magistrates had questioned.

"Anyone who slipped and fell was kicked and rifle-burned by the guards standing on both sides of the corridor."

These include mass killings, murder, rape, torture, pillage, the wanton destruction of property and "ethnic cleansing" — the forced removal of people from their homes because of their religious or ethnic roots.

The refugees tell of children shot before their parents' eyes, camp inmates forced to torture fellow detainees and people, who for years had been friendly neighbours, viciously turning on each other.

"A lot of the accounts we have heard from the refugees so far shows that some people in the war relish torture for torture's sake rather than just killing people," a Swiss investigating magistrate told Reuters.

The magistrate, one of 30 who volunteered to question the group of 50 Bosnian refugees willing to provide detailed information, asked not to be named to protect those he had interviewed from reprisal.

Some Muslims were held for six days without being given anything to eat, he said. When their Serb captors offered them a meal,



Features

Nativism proposal provokes outcry

By Sally Steff Buzbee
The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — California Gov. Pete Wilson's call to stop giving illegal aliens welfare, health care and education — and to stop granting citizenship to their American-born children — was attacked as coldhearted and un-American.

"What he wants to do is basically create a tremendous underclass of second-class citizens," said Roberto Martinez, who monitors immigrant abuse for the American Friends Service Committee. "And that will just mean more hostility, and possibly violence."

The chorus of politicians calling for an immigration crackdown has swelled recently since the bombing of the World Trade Centre, allegedly by Muslim extremists, and the arrival of boatloads of Chinese refugees on U.S. shores.

Mr. Wilson, who had never been outspoken about immigration, recently embarked on his own crusade in a series of stops across the state and in an open letter to President Clinton.

The Republican governor said citizens of other countries are robbing the state of \$2.3 billion in services each year.

"We are compelled to cut aid to the needy, blind, disabled and elderly in California in order to comply with federal mandates to provide services to illegal immigrants," Mr. Wilson said Tuesday near San Clemente, where a fence is being built to prevent illegal immigrants from running across the freeway to evade the border patrol.

States that offer generous benefits, such as California, Florida and Illinois, have become magnets for illegal aliens, the governor said. Cutting off benefits is the only way to stop the immigrants from coming, he said.

Mr. Wilson faces a tough reelection campaign next year, in part because of the state's economic woes. He recently signed a budget that cut most state services by about 11 per cent and reduced welfare and health-care services.

"What can I say? He's just trying to score some votes on the backs of immigrants," said Raymond Uzeta, San Diego director of the Chicano Federation.

Immigration officials estimate

300,000 illegal immigrants enter the United States each year. California absorbs about half of all immigrants, legal and illegal, they say.

Mr. Wilson said illegal aliens account for about 2 million of his state's 31.5 million residents.

And two-thirds of all babies born

in Los Angeles' public hospitals

are the children of illegal immi-

grants, he said.

He called on the federal govern-

ment to buttress efforts by the

border patrol and the Immigration

and Naturalization Service with

more money and manpower.

Mr. Wilson also asked that Mr.

Clinton work to repeal federal

mandates that make illegal im-

migrants eligible for health care,

education and other benefits.

And in the most controversial

part of his plan, he said the

constitution should be amended

to deny citizenship to U.S.-born

children of illegal immigrants.

Silvia Argueta, an attorney for

the American Civil Liberties Union,

complained that the suggestion "goes against the grain of what this country is founded on."

In July, Mr. Clinton asked Congress to appropriate millions for additional border guards and proposed legislation to make it easier to exclude undocumented aliens whose requests for political asylum are clearly bogus.

Both of California's senators, Democrats Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, applauded Mr. Clinton's plan and have been pressing for action against illegal immigrants on their own.

A recent Newsweek poll showed 60 per cent of those surveyed felt immigration is a bad

choice for the country.

Critics disputed Mr. Wilson's assertion that illegal immigrants come to America to take advantage of the welfare system.

Don Villarejo of the California Institute for Rural Studies in Davis said recent Labour Department studies show many illegals eligible for federal and state programmes do not take advantage of them, out of fear or for cultural reasons.

"I'm not searching for treasure, I'm looking for the origin of man," he said.

Just this year, scientists also dug up the bones of a 200,000-year-old mammoth, footprints of various mammals thought to date back 20 million years and puzzling bones from an unidentified species of dinosaur.

"I've been at this for 40 years, and I've never seen anything like it," said Eudald Carbonell, a professor of prehistory at Tarragona's Rovira Y Virgili University, referring to the rash of discoveries. Mr. Carbonell worked with Mr. Arsuaga excavating the

Scientists fleshing out bones of Spain's prehistoric past

By John Pollack
The Associated Press

SANTO DOMINGO DE SILOS, Spain — With the zeal of a crusader, Jorge Maria Rivero began digging months ago in a cave in north central Spain, intent on finding evidence of his ancestors — and yours.

The amateur paleontologist may have hit pay dirt in May in the cave near this medieval town when he unearthed a human skull that he says exhibits characteristics of both prehistoric and modern man.

The skull, whose significance has yet to be determined by experts, is the latest in a recent series of discoveries of prehistoric remains in Spain.

The findings have kindled speculation that much more than previously thought remains of the dinosaurs and primitive humans who once roamed the Iberian Peninsula.

Coincidentally, Spain's maturing scientific community is finally able to excavate sites that long lay fallow for lack of money or adequate training.

"Spain is rich in deposits, and a lot remains to be uncovered. It hasn't been excavated as intensively as other countries," said Jose Luis Arsuaga, a professor of paleontology at Madrid's Complutense University, who last year found three 300,000-year-old human skulls near Burgos in north central Spain.

Mr. Arsuaga and his colleagues published a study of the skulls in the April 8 issue of Nature, showcasing both Spain's potential as a source of prehistoric remains and Spanish scientific talent.

Mr. Rivero, who believes that early man evolved on the Iberian Peninsula, not in Africa, has sent a bone sample from the skull he found to the Miguel Crusafont Institute near Barcelona for testing.

"I'm not searching for treasure, I'm looking for the origin of man," he said.

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"I've been at this for 40 years, and I've never seen anything like it," said Eudald Carbonell, a professor of prehistory at Tarragona's Rovira Y Virgili University, referring to the rash of discoveries. Mr. Carbonell worked with Mr. Arsuaga excavating the

skulls and other bones.

An enterprising tour operator in the area is offering a package weekend including an hour in Roman baths, all the Rioja wine you can drink and a three-hour search for bones and fossils.

Enrique de Alvaro, an archaeologist in the Culture Ministry, said Spanish scientists long suffered for lack of top-flight, post-graduate education and money to support their research and were 20 years behind the United States and France.

Only 10 years ago, Spanish

paleontologists were embarrassed

when a bone fragment hailed as a piece of prehistoric human skull turned out to be from an ancient ass.

But thanks to growing sophistication and economic well-being, Spain has been able to increase funding for scientific research about 15 per cent a year and has sent a generation of students abroad for post-graduate study.

Recent discoveries are the product of such investments, Mr. De Alvaro said.

"The emphasis now is on ex-

cavating fewer sites but doing them well," he said.

International cooperation has played an important role in this development, since scientists from around Europe and the United States collaborate with Spaniards on various projects.

It is often a fruitful exchange.

Foreign researchers get the chance to study interesting sites, while Spanish investigators can share their colleagues' expertise and — sometimes more important — the funding they bring.

"It seems to be a happy mar-

riage," said William Farrand, a geologist at the University of Michigan and director of the University's Exhibit Museum.

"The central part of Spain has not been given a lot of attention," said Mr. Farrand, who is familiar with the Burgos site. "There's good reason to think that the Iberian Peninsula, including Por-

tugal, should have some interesting prehistoric sites."

Investigators cite several reasons for Spain's wealth of re-

mains. The climate has been

temperate in the Iberian Peninsula for millions of years; the region was hospitable to life when ice covered much of the rest of Europe.

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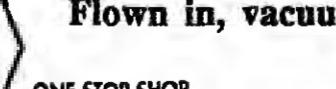
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GATT says public pays heavily for protectionism

GENEVA (AP) — In a change of tactics, the main world trade organisation has turned to the public to pressure governments to wrap up a long overdue trade liberalising pact.

In a report released Monday, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) said government policies keep prices on products like food, clothing and cars artificially high and increase taxes.

"It is high time that governments made clear to consumers just how much they pay for decisions to protect domestic industries from import competition," said GATT Director-General Peter Sutherland.

"The effects of protection almost always fall most heavily on the poorest sections of society," he said. "It is they who... have to spend the highest proportion of their household budget on necessities like clothing, footwear and basic food products. It is exactly in these areas that protection is most common and intense."

GATT's Uruguay Round of trade talks are aimed at cutting import duties by one third, reducing protection for agriculture and textiles, and easing restrictions on global trade in services like banking and insurance.

The Uruguay Round package would expand the world economy

by an estimated \$200 billion annually, but would mean sacrificing the interests of protected domestic industries, which usually have powerful political lobbies.

More than 100 governments taking part in the talks originally pledged to sign the agreement by the end of 1990. Despite numerous declarations of support, they have missed a string of deadlines. The next target: Dec. 15.

Until now, GATT has sought to convince governments and businesses of the benefits of the trade liberalising deal. In the new report, it tries to cut through the jargon and explain those benefits directly to consumers.

Examples listed by GATT in the report, which is based on the organisation's own research and independent studies, include:

— Textiles and clothing. Import quotas and tariffs cost a four-person household in the United States up to \$420 per year, in Canada \$220 per year and in the United Kingdom about \$130 per year.

— Electronics. Video recorders, televisions, compact disc players are often subject to high import barriers. These restrictions cost consumers in the European Community an estimated \$1.3 billion per year.

— Cars. American and European restrictions against Japanese

imports both cut the choice of cars and increase the price. One study showed Japanese cars in Britain were 70 per cent more expensive than in Japan.

— Rice. Japan has a ban on imports to protect domestic farmers. Rice costing \$45 to \$50 per 100 lbs. in the United States sells for \$175 to \$250 in Japan.

— Sugar. Subsidies to protect the U.S. sugar industry have nearly doubled prices for American consumers.

The report cites estimates that government protection of agriculture cost individual consumers in the United States \$360 per year, in Japan \$600, in Switzerland \$840 and in Finland \$910.

GATT said that money spent — on tariffs, quotas, subsidies and other measures — to protect jobs in inefficient industries would be put to better use in retraining affected workers.

The protection cost per job is usually far greater than the wage the worker earns, it said.

It said in the United States the cost of saving a single job in the garment sector was estimated at between \$36,000 and \$82,000.

Another study in the United States showed the costs per job saved at \$240,000 in the orange juice industry, at \$135,000 in the ceramic tiles industry, at \$420,000 in the colour TV sector," it said.

Suharto says Indonesia on verge of economic take-off

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia is on the verge of an economic take-off that could lift it to the level of the newly industrialised world, President Suharto said Monday.

In his annual state of the nation address to parliament, the 72-year-old president said that under his guidance Indonesia was on track to quadruple its per capita income, currently about \$650, over the next 25 years.

"We are confident that we shall succeed in entering the take-off stage because we have made the necessary ideological, political, social and security preparations," he said.

OPEC-member Indonesia under President Suharto's iron

grip has long been a model of how developing countries can foster impressive growth with prudent fiscal policies and manageable debts.

President Suharto said real gross domestic product (GDP) growth last year reached 6.3 per cent, pushing average growth over the past five years to nearly seven per cent against a five per cent target.

Despite such achievements, the World Bank at the weekend warned that 27 million Indonesians, out of a population of 183 million, were locked in poverty and that would be hard to reduce.

President Suharto, who has ruled the sprawling archipelago for a quarter of a century, un-

veiled a vision of the next 25 years in which growth would be at least seven per cent, raising per capita income to that of middle income nations.

In the next five-year plan, which starts next year, he said growth would rise to more than 6.5 per cent with an average increase of 6.2 per cent. Per capita income should at the end of the five year period surpass \$1,000.

President Suharto said the key to such success was increasing the country's earnings outside oil and gas, which he said had been the dynamo for the past five years' growth.

In 1981, oil and gas accounted for 82 per cent of export revenue,

but by 1992 accounted for only 31 per cent.

"The key to achieve all these objectives is to raise non-oil and gas domestic revenues. One of the principal prerequisites to reach these goals is the availability of investment funds," he said.

President Suharto said he hoped that by fostering domestic and foreign investment Indonesia could boost such exports by at least 16.5 per cent a year, with manufactured exports expected to rise more than 17.5 per cent a year.

He called for economic growth that was labour intensive to soak up a pool of unused or underused workers, to keep inflation below last year's five per cent and the setting up of rural programmes to eradicate poverty in villages.

Pakistan raises discount, interest rates

KARACHI (R) — Pakistan's central bank Sunday announced a two percentage point rise in its discount rate to 17 per cent and ended a concessionary interest scheme for industry to try to curb rising prices.

But some private economists doubted the move would succeed in cutting inflation, which the Federal Bureau of Statistics put at a year-on-year rate of 9.12 per cent in June.

State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Mohammad Yaqub told reporters the discount rate cut would take effect from Monday.

Interest for domestic machinery manufacturers would rise to a market-based rate of 11 per cent from the previous concessionary eight per cent, he added.

"The main objective... is to reduce the rate of inflation which is the worst form of taxation, and its burden falls very heavily on the poorer segments of society," Mr. Yaqub, who took over as SBP governor last month, said.

"The government is making a determined effort to reduce the budget deficit and to contain government borrowing from the banking system," he added. "We want to rationalise the (financial) policies."

Pakistan plans to cut its budget deficit to 5.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) or \$3 billion rupees (\$3.1 billion) for 1993/94 (July/June), down from last year's shortfall of seven per cent, or \$9 billion rupees (\$3.5 billion).

Mr. Yaqub also announced several other measures, including raising the three-day repurchase rate to 17 per cent against six-month T-bills and three-year federal investment bonds.

The maximum annual rate of interest, known as the rate of profit in Pakistan under Islamic banking laws, will rise to 22 per cent from 20 per cent.

But some economic analysts doubted the changes would meet their aims.

Saudi firm to invest \$750m in new ships

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A Saudi shipping company, one of the biggest in the world, is planning to invest \$750 million to buy 10 new vessels to face an increase in operations, the company said Monday.

The National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia (NSCSA) is studying bids from South Korea, Sweden, Norway, Scotland and other countries to build five oil tankers and five container vessels for the transport of cargo.

"The boom that started in early 1992 has brought with it the familiar problems of inflation and supply bottlenecks that will inevitably push the government into a clampdown on credit, investment and imports," the review says.

The EU rates risk by giving countries a points score based on various economic criteria such as debt ratios and judgements on the country's economic policy and political situation.

Scores can range from zero for the lowest risk countries to 100 for

the highest risk — a score achieved only by the former Yugoslav republics, Ukraine and Iraq.

In the latest survey, China's score rose to 30 points from 25, putting it in the same category as Malaysia and the Czech Republic.

"China's government is using its crude macroeconomic weapons to curb runaway growth," said Ken Davies, the EU's senior economist for the Asia-Pacific region. "But it does not want to revert to central planning, which would depress the economy and frighten foreign investors."

The report says the possible imposition of strong deflationary measures in China is the major source of uncertainty in the region.

It says the resulting austerity will harm growth in Hong Kong and Taiwan and temporarily divert investment away from the Chinese mainland.

Officials at the NSCSA headquarters in Riyadh said the oil tankers would range between 250,000 tonnes and 280,000 tonnes each and a decision on the bids would be taken before the end of this year.

The company, in which the Saudi government has a 29 per cent shareholding, was in contact with major oil firms like Aramco, British Petroleum, Shell and Exxon to lease the oil tankers.

NSCSA, which serves more than 45 ports around the world, is the fifth largest company in the world in petrochemical shipping.

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Khmer Rouge step up attacks; abduct 8 Vietnamese children

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — The Khmer Rouge stepped up their attacks in central Cambodia, killing two ethnic Vietnamese and abducting eight children before attacking a train and killing two passengers over the weekend, U.N. and government officials said Monday.

The two ethnic Vietnamese were killed and the eight children abducted in a raid on the village of Chouk Trov in the central province of Kompong Chhnang, U.N. spokesman Eric Falt said.

Mr. Falt did not accuse the Khmer Rouge directly but said the attack bore "a lot of similarities" to recent Khmer Rouge attacks against Vietnamese settlers in Cambodia.

But another U.N. official, who declined to be identified, said peacekeepers in the Kompong Chhnang indicated that the radical faction's guerrillas were responsible.

A group of 30 guerrillas raided the village around 8:00 p.m. Friday, Mr. Falt said.

"They came aboard several boats mounted with machine guns, they robbed the villagers, mostly ethnic Vietnamese, and shot one of them in the chest point blank," Mr. Falt said.

The injured man, who was treating a sick person when he was shot, later died, he said.

Later in the evening the guerrillas abducted a group of 11 people including the eight children, and took them away by boat.

One person, who was believed to be a Cambodian, was later released but another, an ethnic Vietnamese woman, was killed, he said.

"Yesterday morning (Sunday) UNTAC naval observers found the body of a woman who was part of that group of 11. She had been shot in the back of the head," he said.

The remaining eight children were reportedly being held for ransom, he said.

Also in Kompong Chhnang province, Khmer Rouge guerrillas attacked a train as it travelled from the capital to the country's second city of Battambang.

The Khmer Rouge detonated mines as the train approached, derailing the engine and four carriages, and opened fire, seriously wounding six people two of whom later died, director of the railway service Pich Kim-seng said.

The radical faction's guerrillas also blew up two bridges in the province as well as one in Battambang last week, he said.

Sunday's train attack was the second fatal one this month, following 16 attacks on trains, track and bridges last month. Ten people were killed and some 30 wounded in a recent attack on the Sihanoukville to Phnom Penh train in southern Cambodia.

The chief of the U.N. peacekeeping mission here Yasushi Akashi recently wrote a strongly worded letter to Khmer Rouge nominal leader Hieu Samphan accusing the radical faction's leadership of encouraging the massacres of ethnic Vietnamese.

Thailand's intelligence chief has accused the Khmer Rouge of trying to drag Bangkok into a fight with Phnom Penh by stepping up armed clashes on ti-

border, the Nation newspaper said Monday.

"I suspect the Khmer Rouge want to drag Thailand into the conflict," General Charan Kulavanjaya, secretary general of the National Security Council (NSC), said in an interview, adding that he hoped to be able to work out the problem with Mr. Kieu Samphan.

It was the first time since the 1991 Paris peace accords were signed that a ranking Thai official had unequivocally blamed the Khmer Rouge, observers here said.

By implicating Thailand in the attacks, the Khmer Rouge hoped Bangkok would throw its weight into convincing Phnom Penh to give it the political role it wants, an NSC source who declined to be identified told AFP.

In the Nation, Gen. Charan pointed to the recent Khmer Rouge capture of a U.N. post in Cambodia only several hundred metres from the Thai border. The United Nations later accused the Thai army of having helped the Khmer Rouge in the incident.

In May ratifies the constitution and turns itself into a fully sovereign government, he said.

Renewal of his term will be by general election, Mr. Ing Kieth said.

Prince Norodom Ranariddh, currently a co-prime minister in the interim coalition government, is likely to become the sole prime minister when the constitution is ratified next month, Cambodian political sources told AFP.

In exchange, Mr. Hun Sen would move one notch down to first deputy premier and have control over the daily functions of the armed forces, the sources said.

ping up the border incidents the Khmer Rouge — who have been demanding an advisory role to Prince Sihanouk — want to prove that there can be no real peace without them.

He added that he expected the Khmer Rouge to continue their military operations.

Meanwhile, Cambodia's new draft constitution, giving Prince Norodom Sihanouk a five-year term as head of state with powers over the army and cabinet ministers, will be completed Tuesday, the head of the drafting committee said.

The constitution sets up a parliamentary system with a head of state elected for a five-year term, a prime minister and two deputy premiers, committee President Hieu Kieth said.

"Prince Sihanouk is the only one capable" of filling the role of head of state, Mr. Ing Kieth said.

Initially he will be elected by a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly, which will come into being as soon as the body elected in U.N.-run polls in May ratifies the constitution and turns itself into a fully sovereign government, he said.

Security at the 100-year-old church was tight. The media was kept across the street. But reporters were given a programme of the service that included a message from James Jordan's wife, Deloris, and her five children: Michael, James Ronald, Deloris, Larry and Roslyn.



Jordan family, friends honour slain patriarch

TEACHEY, N.C. (AP) — Michael Jordan's much-publicised life turned very private Sunday as the NBA star and his family said their good-byes to his slain father.

Family and friends who gathered for a private service at the rockfish African Methodist Episcopal Church were urged to remember the way James Raymond Jordan lived and not the way he died. Police said Mr. Jordan, 56, was shot to death by robbers when he pulled his car off a highway last month to rest.

Security at the 100-year-old church was tight. The media was kept across the street. But reporters were given a programme of the service that included a message from James Jordan's wife, Deloris, and her five children: Michael, James Ronald, Deloris, Larry and Roslyn.

"Everyone who has been touched by the warmth and strength of this special man can understand the depth of our family's sense of loss," it said.

"Dad is no longer with us. But the lessons which he taught us will remain with us forever and they will give us the strength to move forward with a renewed sense of purpose in our lives."

Most of the family arrived in two limousines, with Michael following in a separate car. Also attending the service were Dean Smith, Michael's coach at the University of North Carolina, and B.J. Armstrong, a Chicago Bulls teammate.

About 100 people lined the street outside and an estimated 200 were inside. The photograph shows Deloris Jordan (centre) is helped out of the church behind the casket of her husband (AP photo).

Abkhazia pullback partially suspended

MOSCOW (AFP) — Georgian and Abkhazian forces have suspended their withdrawal from one of two conflict zones amid mutual accusations of violating a force disengagement accord, officials from both sides said Monday.

Abkhazian leader Vladislav Ardzinba, alleging that Georgian troops had not pulled back as planned, ordered a halt to the departure from Abkhaz territory of volunteers from other parts of the Caucasus in southern Russia, a spokesman for the Abkhaz parliament told AFP by telephone.

A Georgian Defence Ministry spokesman told an AFP reporter in Tbilisi that the pullback of Georgian troops was halted Monday in response to Mr. Ardzinba's suspension order.

"The first Georgian units and military hardware were already prepared to leave Abkhazia, but

following the decree of Mr. Ardzinba, Georgia suspended the withdrawal of its troops from the western front," the ministry spokesman said.

The western front refers to battle lines along the Gumista River north of the Abkhazian capital, Sukhumi. There were no reports of delays in the pullbacks of forces from a second front further south at Ochamchiria.

The Abkhaz parliament spokesman said Mr. Ardzinba ordered the volunteers from the Confederation of Caucasus Mountain Peoples to delay their departure from Abkhazia due to Georgia's failure to comply with the disengagement timetable.

Under the terms of a timetable, these volunteers, who account for about one-third of the armed units who have fought alongside Abkhazian separatist forces, were to have left Abkhazian terri-

tory Monday.

But the spokesman said the suspension order was given in response to an admission by Georgian authorities Sunday that their pullout was being delayed by Georgian nationalist groups in the region opposed to the withdrawal who were interfering with logistics.

The Ardzinba decree applied only to the non-Abkhaz "good-will volunteers" and was "not aimed at bringing on the collapse of the process of resolving the conflict in Abkhazia," the Parliamentary Press Service said, according to ITAR-TASS.

A Russian general who is a member of the tripartite commission supervising the disengagement said military hardware had been withdrawn from frontline positions but criticised both sides for failing to implement the withdrawal plan on schedule, ITAR-TASS said.

The departure ceremonies Sunday night were attended by Vice President Al Gore, who praised the Pope for his support of the environment and said the United States joined the Pope in opposing those who "heavily contumacious upon their creation."

At every stop the Pope took the opportunity to express his disapproval of abortion, either implicitly or explicitly.

Sunday was among the busiest days of a week-long trip that also took him to Jamaica and Mexico.

He delivered a sermon to at least 350,000 people at an open-air mass in a park 15 miles (24 km) southeast of Denver at the close of the youth pageant.

The mass was not without problems. Some 7,000 at the park needed medical treatment for dehydration and other ailments.

Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui, the party chairman, told 2,100 delegates to the Nationalists' 14th congress that the party was threatened by internal factional struggles and growing political opposition.

In recent years, pluralism in society has led to differences in political ideology among our comrades, posing a severe challenge to us in elections," he said in an opening speech at a plush Taipei convention centre.

"Implementing internal reform is more difficult than tackling external challenges, but our goal has been set and we must overcome all obstacles," Mr. Lee said.

Several rebel delegates waved banners and shouted demands for action to reduce the chairman's power, such as barring delegates appointed by Mr. Lee from voting in party elections.

"The party faces a severe crisis because of its poor leadership," said delegate Fu Kuen-Chen, a member of a rebel faction that accuses party leaders of failing to beat corruption and dragging their feet on reform.

About 20 supporters of a conservative Nationalist faction, denouncing Mr. Lee as a "dictator," clashed briefly with club-wielding police outside the convention centre. No serious injuries were reported.

The seven-day congress is expected to introduce more democratic procedures to choose party leaders, electing the chairman-elect instead of acclamation.

There were widespread fears that time was running out for survivors because of injury and lack of oxygen, food and water.

Pope ends U.S. trip

DENVER, Colorado (R) — Pope John Paul II concluded his third trip to the United States Sunday, crusading against abortion and imploring American Catholics to take up the defence of life and "preach it from the rooftops."

"The culture of life means respect for nature and protection of God's work of creation. In a special way it means respect for human life from the first moment of conception until its natural end," he said in a speech before leaving.

His closing remarks reflected the theme of the Pope's four-day visit to participate in World Youth Day festivities.

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Italy raises stakes in Bosnia airlift

SARAJEVO (R) — Italy dramatically raised the stakes Monday in an international scramble to airlift wounded people from Sarajevo by offering to treat more than 450 — the entire remaining United Nations list of

U.N. sources said Finland may also have offered a substantial number of hospital places, but gave no details.

In Geneva, Bosnia's warring leaders were due to sit down together to talk peace for the first time in almost two weeks, but hopes they would soon agree on a new Bosnian map were tempered by a fresh walk-out threat.

The Italian offer came soon after a senior U.N. official had appealed for more beds abroad, describing the highly publicised weekend airlift of just 35 sick and wounded people to Sweden and Britain as the tip of the iceberg.

Tony Land, who heads the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the Bosnian capital, also rejected charges that some of the patients evacuated to Britain were soldiers who had braved their way to Sunday's flight.

"The medical evacuation is only the highly visible tip of an enormous iceberg of suffering in Sarajevo," Mr. Land told a news briefing, appealing for more help.

UNHCR official Peter Kessler later told Reuters the Italian government had offered to take all of the sick and wounded on the U.N. list of people seeking evacuation from the city.

"We have an offer from the Italian government of 454 places, a list of beds and hospitals that are available right down to the exact kind of treatment that they can provide," he said.

In addition to the 39 people airlifted out Sunday, the UNHCR has a list with 400 names of further cases. They are under consideration for treatment abroad by the U.N. medical committee which meets once a month to evaluate requests for evacuation from the besieged Bosnian capital.

Chief United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) spokesman Barry Frewer appeared to support Mr. Karadzic's comments by saying in Sarajevo the Bosnian Serb encirclement had been relaxed to a degree it was no longer appropriate to call it a siege.

"I would not characterise it as a siege," the Canadian naval commander said. In a carefully worded formulation that may be linked to the delicate state of the Geneva peace talks, Major Frewer said he saw gradual improvements that would not fit the concept of siege warfare.

"We want to make as much progress as we can (before the meeting) but I can't tell you how much that will be," Sir Robin said.

"We have a lot of work to do and we've been getting on with it," he added. "I don't want to talk in terms of progress or no progress."

But the UNHCR's Land, speaking at the same briefing, described the city as besieged, saying aid was still only reaching Sarajevo under military escort.

While aid arrives under escort, a few people are reaching the West for medical treatment. Planes left Sunday for Sweden and Britain. Another flight to Ireland is planned.

The suggestion many of those evacuated Sunday were members of the Bosnian army and not, as public opinion had demanded, children, prompted outrage in the British press.

"They've sent us soldiers," said the Daily Mail.

But Mr. Land said a soldier who had laid down his gun was entitled to medical treatment and under international law it was illegal to refuse to treat such patients.

He said there was no one on the British flight who was a serving soldier or who could be classified as a belligerent.

"Under both the Geneva Conventions and our own (UNHCR) regulations, irrespective of how a person is injured or what he has done, once a person has laid down his weapon ceases to be a soldier," he said.

Mr. Land appealed to the West for more efforts to treat the hundreds more sick and wounded still in Sarajevo, where despite a period of relative calm recently, people are being killed and wounded almost every day.

The airlift ran into trouble from the outset, when U.N. officials accused Western governments of staging a publicity stunt after they had ignored appeals for help for many months.

China, U.K. discuss Hong Kong polls

PEKING (R) — China and Britain returned to the bargaining table Monday for a ninth round of talks on controversial political reforms proposed for Hong Kong ahead of the colony's 1997 handover to the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

Navratilova claims 165th singles title

MANHATTAN BEACH, California (AP) — Martina Navratilova rallied from a 1-5 second-set deficit on her favorite court to defeat top-seeded Arantxa Sanchez Vicario 7-5, 7-6 (6-4) for her 165th career singles title Sunday in the Virginia Slims of Los Angeles.

Navratilova, 36, the second seed and defending champion, has reached the final 11 times and won eight titles on the fast hardcourt of the Manhattan Country Club. She improved to 32-4 this year with her fourth tournament victory.

The winner's check for \$75,000 pushed Navratilova's career earnings to more than \$19 million.

"Like the man yelled at me at the ceremony, 'hey, that's over \$19 million.' I said, 'yeah, I wish I had it,'" she said. "It just means I've been playing for a long time and done a really good job at winning the money but not a very good job at keeping the money."

Sanchez Vicario, whose only victory in 14 matches against Navratilova came in 1990 on clay, opened a 2-0 lead in the second set.

Navratilova trailed 0-30 on her serve before recovering to climb to 1-2. Sanchez Vicario then took over and won the next three games for a 5-1 lead, appearing ready to force a third set.

That's when Navratilova began her comeback — winning four straight games to tie the set 5-5.

Sanchez Vicario served for the set twice during that stretch, but both times committed errors on game point.

Energy by her improved play and a sellout crowd of 6,166 cheering her on, Navratilova served a love game to go up 6-5. She was two points from victory when Sanchez Vicario hit a crosscourt forehand on the line to tie the set 6-6.

"I just wasn't going to give it to her; she had to earn it," Navratilova said. "She wasn't able to close the door. So I said thank you very much, I'll slide right through."

Navratilova dominated the tiebreaker, going up 3-0, then 6-1.

"Game, set, match," chair umpire Jan Ryan announced before realizing the match wasn't over.

"That surprised me and the crowd started screaming," Sanchez Vicario said. "I don't think she's a very good umpire."

She scowled, turned her back and waved her hands as if to dismiss Ryan in the chair. Sanchez Vicario felt it was another officiating error in a match that had other controversial calls.

Sanchez Vicario became irritated as she served for the first set at 5-4, 15-15 and Ryan overruled a linesman's call in the corner. She eventually lost the game and the set.

"If the linesman called the ball good, I don't know why she (Ryan) has to call the ball out," Sanchez Vicario said. "Of course it bothered me. It was a very important point. It made a lot of difference."

Navratilova had no sympathy for her opponent. "I think Arantxa felt she got bad calls, but they were the right calls," Navratilova said. "The crowd gets excited and then she (Sanchez Vicario) doesn't hear the call."

Sanchez Vicario staved off two match points on Navratilova errors, then hit a forehand volley winner to cut her deficit to 6-4.

Navratilova ended the suspense of the fourth match point when Sanchez Vicario sent a buck-hand wide.

"I could've won in two sets," Sanchez Vicario said. "I had my chances and I didn't take them."

Chang upsets Edberg

Michael Chang rebounded from being shut out in the second set and beat Stefan Edberg 7-5, 6-4 Sunday to capture the Thriftway ATP championship.

"I was thinking that although the first set was so close, in the second set he was just controlling everything and I had to change things around," said Chang, whose win moved him up two spots to seventh in the ATP tour rankings.

Chang broke Edberg only twice in the match, but that was enough as he won his third ATP tour title this year. He also won at Jakarta, Indonesia, and Osaka, Japan.

"He just runs down a lot of balls," Edberg said of Chang, a doggedly persistent baseliner. "He was sort of ahead all the time. He makes you work really hard. I guess he was a couple of points better than I was today."

Edberg, seeking his third ATP championship after winning here in 1987 and 1990, also was runner-up in doubles. He and Henrik Hulm lost to Andre Agassi and Peter Korda 7-6, 7-6.

Chang, 21, reached the title match by beating Agassi in three sets Saturday, and Sunday's match was almost a replay. Against Agassi, he won a close first set, appeared to collapse in the second, then rallied to win.

Both players had reason to feel fatigued Sunday. Chang experienced nausea and dehydration in his match against Agassi, and Edberg needed three sets to knock off to-ranked Pete Sampras Saturday night. He then played a doubles match that lasted past midnight in the Thriftway-sponsored event.

Black Sunday for American soccer giants

a disappointing record for a team which has never failed to qualify for the World Cup. But do play their next four matches at home, which gives them a strong ray of hope.

South American champions Argentina, who have appeared in three out of the last four World Cup finals, had an even worse time than Brazil.

With 70,000 fans roaring on Colombia in the metropolitan Stadium, they had the perfect start when Ivan Valenciano, fed by Carlos Valderrama, scored in the second minute.

Valderrama, known for his Lavish hairstyles, was again instrumental in the second goal, as he this time fed Adolfo Valencia, who made no mistake eight minutes after the break.

Argentina at least claimed a consolation goal, when Medina Bello took advantage of a slip in the Colombian defence in the 88th minute, but they still suffered their first loss in three games.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANIAH HIRSH
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FRANCE WINS WORLD TITLE

East-West vulnerable. West deals.

NORTH
♦ Q 8
♦ Q J 10 9 6
♦ J 5
♦ Q J 10 4
WEST
♦ A 9 7 6 4 3 ♦ J 5 2
♦ A 7
♦ 8 4 2
♦ K 8
♦ K 6
SOUTH
♦ R 10
♦ 4 3 2
♦ A 8 Q 7 6
♦ A 8 7

The bidding:
West North East South
1 ♠ Pass Pass 2 NT
Pass 3 0 Pass 3 5
Pass 3 NT Pass 4 2
Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: Ace of ♦

Using only its two most experienced partners throughout the final, France defeated the United States to win the 9th World Bridge Team Olympiad in Salomaggiore, Italy. France won the first Olympiad in 1980.

Star of the French team was its *enfant terrible*, Paul Chemla. On this deal from the semifinal match against the Netherlands, he became declarer at four hearts. His jump to two no trump ostensibly showed a balanced hand of 18-19 points, and

The first step in this campaign was for South to drop the king of spades under the ace. The spade return was by diamond's queen.

We led the ace of spades, and declarer saw immediately that the contract was safe as long as East could be kept off lead until at least two rounds of trumps had been drawn, to prevent an early lead through the ace of clubs. The secret to achieving that goal is to force the danger hand, East, to play without any knowledge of the distribution or what is necessary to defeat the contract.

The first step in this campaign was for South to drop the king of

spades under the ace. The spade

return was by diamond's queen.

After winning the final, Christi-

ne turned to the crowd and waved his fingers in a sharp-shooter salute as if to show that he had

the diamond return was taken on

the table and the king of clubs

was declarer at four hearts. His jump to

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Thompson, Evans collect gold medals

KOBE, Japan (AP) — Jenny Thompson won the women's 50-metre freestyle and added gold in the 400-metre medley relay Sunday, finishing the Pan Pacific Swimming Championships with six gold medals from seven races.

Jane Evans captured her third gold of the meet by winning the women's 800-metre freestyle.

In all, American swimmers won seven races Sunday, finishing the championships with 23 to eight for Australia, which won three on Sunday. New Zealand, Costa Rica and Japan took one gold medal each in the races at Kobe Port Island Sports Centre.

Australia's Kieren Perkins won his third gold of the meet Sunday, breaking his own 2-year-old meet record in the men's 1,500-metre freestyle — 14 minutes, 59.79 seconds — with a race of 14:55.92. He had won the 400 and 800 earlier.

Australian compatriot Daniel Kowalski followed in 15:06.77, with American Carlton Bruner third in 15:16.64.

The 20-year-old Thompson, from Dover, N.H., equalled the gold haul of Franzis Van Almsiek of Germany at the European Swimming Championships at Sheffield, England, in early August.

She missed victory only in the 200-metre freestyle, while taking golds in the 50- and 100-metre freestyle, the 100-metre butterfly, the 400- and 800-metre freestyle relays and the 400-metre medley relay.

"I'm so happy to win a lot of gold medals as I swam pretty well," she said.

Evans gradually widened her lead throughout the 800 and won in 8 minutes, 23.72 seconds, short of her world record of 8:16.22.

Evans already had won gold in the 400-metre freestyle and 800-metre freestyle relay.

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freestyle, the 100-metre butterfly,

relays and the 400-metre medley

relay.

"I'm so happy to win a lot of

gold medals as I swam pretty well,"

she said.

Evans gradually widened her

lead throughout the 800 and won

in 8 minutes, 23.72 seconds, short

of her world record of 8:16.22.

Evans already had won gold in

the 400-metre freestyle and 800-

metre freestyle relay.

She missed victory only in the

200-metre freestyle, while taking

gold in the 50- and 100-metre

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Husseini: Israel must admit it is talking with PLO

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israel must acknowledge it is negotiating with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the leader of the Palestinian peace talks team said Monday after meeting a PLO official in occupied Jerusalem for the first time.

"This person has been appointed by (PLO Chairman) Yasser Arafat and his presence contributes to the delegation's work," said peace team leader Faisal Husseini after the Palestinian delegation had talks with Hassan Abdul Rahman, the organisation's representative in Canada.

"We must continue on this road until it becomes clear to all, including Israel, that this country is for all Palestinians and they have every right to participate in the work to have their independent state," he told the French news agency (AFP).

Israel will only negotiate with Palestinians from the occupied territories, refusing to allow the exiled PLO leadership to attend the peace talks.

Mr. Abdul Rahman arrived in the occupied West Bank a week ago when he was granted an entry permit from the Israeli military authorities after his mother died.

Monday's meeting was the first in occupied Jerusalem between the Palestinian delegation and a PLO official. They discussed the peace process and preparation for the 11th session of bilateral negotiations with Israel, set to begin Aug. 30 in Washington.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Sunday that official PLO statements from Tunis made no mention of the inclusion of members of the Palestinian delegation in the PLO's oversight committee "so there is, therefore, no change in their status."

Mr. Abdul Rahman, head of the PLO Information Centre in Washington from 1974 to 1992, is due to become one of the Palestinian delegation's chief advisers at the bilateral talks.

Israel has said it will continue to talk to the Palestinian delegation, even though the PLO designated its members as its representatives at a meeting in Tunis last week.

After a meeting to sort out differences between the delegation and the exiled PLO leadership in Tunis, the delegation members became part of a committee overseeing the negotiations, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, a member of the organisation's Executive Committee.

The office of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks denied reports of a split among negotiators Sunday, while one negotiator went public with a demand to sack most of the team.

The report of a fiery meeting

among the delegates on Aug. 7 was published in the Hadashot newspaper.

They said some negotiators blasted the PLO leadership as corrupt and self-serving, with Mr. Husseini saying it should be stopped.

The reports were "untrue and unfounded," a delegation statement said.

According to Hadashot, the delegates fiercely debated whether the PLO leadership was undercutting them by presenting the United States with more flexible position papers.

"We have to topple this leadership. It is incapable and inept," Mr. Husseini was quoted as saying.

Deputy spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi also criticised the PLO leadership, saying it was uninterested in the residents of the occupied territories.

"They are casting aside the youth and sacrificing them for their own interests," Dr. Ashrawi was quoted as saying.

The delegation office in Jerusalem said the minutes were fictitious.

"These transparent attempts at driving a wedge between the Palestinian delegation and its leadership are part of a campaign of distortion," the statement said.

Since the reported meeting, three of the delegates had threatened to resign, but appeared to have worked out their differences after meeting with PLO leaders in Tunisia.

But negotiator Freiha Abu Meidan said Sunday that Haidar Abdul Shafi should replace Mr. Husseini as overall team chief, after the latter's noisy clash with Mr. Arafat last week.

"This man means for me credibility," Mr. Abu Meidan said of his fellow Gaza.

Dr. Abdul Shafi, as head of the team to the bilateral talks, was considered head of the team until earlier this year, when the position of joint bilateral-multilateral team chief was created for Mr. Husseini.

Mr. Abu Meidan, a lawyer, said most team members should be replaced with professionals assigned specific roles.

"I suggest to reorganise all the delegation and to give them a job description... actually we need now for the next year, or for the next stage, a delegation of professionals," Mr. Abu Meidan told Israel Radio.

Mr. Meidan said the only top member of the team he felt should retain his post was Dr. Abdul Shafi.

"He is the umbrella of the delegation. He is the only man who should still stay in the top of this delegation... this man means for me credibility," he said.

U.S.: Bosnian Serbs still under strike threat

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Bosnian Serb strangulation of the Bosnian capital persists and they remain under threat of air strikes despite withdrawal from strategic hilltops near Sarajevo, the State Department said Monday.

State Department spokesman Mike McCurry also said Washington would airlift 100 more emergency medical cases from Bosnia to the United States for treatment and would facilitate visas for Bosnian athletes being brought to the United States to train for the Olympics.

Mr. McCurry said U.S. officials have seen the United Nations certification of the Serbs withdrawal from Mount Igman and Mount Bjelansica (See page 8), but he stressed: "...the withdrawal from the mountaintops was a necessary step but it is certainly not an entirely sufficient step. We need to see the strangulation of Sarajevo ceases."

Until then, "...the warning that we have issued to the Serbs certainly remains in effect," he told reporters.

The United States previously had accepted more than 100 emergency medical cases from Bosnia but will increase that number by another 100," said Mr. McCurry.

He admitted publicity over the plight of a Bosnian girl who was airlifted to London for medical treatment had triggered a new international response to such cases.

Bosnian Vice-President Ejup Ganic demanded the dismissal of U.N. spokesman Barry Frewer, accusing him of lying by suggesting earlier in the day that Sarajevo was no longer under siege from Bosnian Serbs.

In a letter read over Bosnian government radio, Mr. Ganic declared Commander Frewer persona non grata and called on U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali to have him recalled.

The letter was also addressed



SCRAMBLE TO SAFETY: Rescue workers scramble for safety frightened by a small tremor as the rubble settles Monday at the site of Royal Plaza Hotel which collapsed, killed 85 people (see page 8)

AP photo

occupation from August 1990 to February 1991. Baghdad says no Kuwaitis remain in Iraq.

'Iran using PoWs'

Iraq accused Iran Monday of using Iraqis captured during their 1980-1988 war as political pawns and held it to release them.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman, quoted by the Iraqi News Agency, rejected suggestions from Tehran that Iraq was still holding 5,000 Iranian prisoners of war.

The regime in Iran... continues using the issue of PoWs as a political card to realise dubious targets," the spokesman said. "Iraq demands the Iranian regime to free all Iraqi prisoners registered with the ICRC and also those not registered."

Iraq and Iran give conflicting PoW figures following a series of mass prisoner exchanges. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) says it keeps records on 20,000 Iraqi prisoners in Iran and around 1,000 Iranians in Iraq.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman said Iran still kept "tens of thousands of Iraqi PoWs, registered and non-registered" and rejected Tehran's suggestion that it still held Iranians.

The Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Iraq denies false and misleading statements by Iranian officials and confirms that Iraq had set free all Iranian PoWs, he added.

The Security Council has linked any easing of sanctions to compliance with the various ceasefire resolutions.

Al Jumhouriyah urged the Iraqi delegation to the talks to be ready to face allegations from "the representative of the godless regime in Kuwait who will present more than a lie for which he will hold his conspiracy against Iraq."

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